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Intelligence Memorandum

*Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower
Developments in Indochina*

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**Recent Communist Logistical
and Manpower Developments
in Indochina**

Communist logistical activity continues to decline in southern Laos as the rainy season intensifies. In the North Vietnamese Panhandle, moderately heavy supply movements continue around Dong Hoi, and in northern South Vietnam a high level of NVA resupply activity is still in progress.

Personnel infiltration to South Vietnam's MR 1 continued during the week with two new combat groups detected, and a major NVA infiltration-related regiment has moved elements from southern Laos into western MR 2, possibly to oversee future infiltration. In other unit redeployments, two regiments of the NVA 5th Division have deployed from South Vietnam's MR 4 to MR 3. There is also evidence that various Communist anti-aircraft units are shifting into and out of South Vietnam. As a result, Hanoi has expanded its command and control capabilities over air defense operations in northern South Vietnam and southern Laos and bolstered its anti-aircraft posture in southern South Vietnam.

Note: Comments and queries regarding this memorandum are welcomed. They may be directed to [redacted] of the Office of Economic Research, [redacted]

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DISCUSSION

Recent Logistical Developments

North Vietnam

25X1 1. Photography [] over the China/North Vietnam border
25X1 area showed an increase in the level of traffic at the P'ing-hsiang transloading
yard []. The level of activity approached
that evident just before the cease-fire []. A total of 67 tank
cars was identified -- the highest number ever seen at the yard -- and new
facilities which double the petroleum storage capacity at this border crossing
point appeared complete. Although no military equipment was identified,
more than 500 cargo trucks were seen in the general vicinity of the yard --
a large increase over the number sighted there earlier this year.

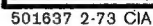
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2. Significant Communist logistical activity in the North Vietnamese
Panhandle continues to be detected. The focus of activity is still at Binh
Tram 26 around Dong Hoi. The binh tram instructed a subordinate on
30 May to have a ferry ready on the following day to accommodate the
northward movement of 55 cargo vehicles, and occasional daily wrapup
reports from the Binh Tram 26 area on vehicle movements show large
numbers both northbound and southbound. A report of 1 June from an
element of the binh tram indicated that 2,200 tons of cargo had been
"moved out" over an unspecified time period, and 250 tons "of all types
of cargo" were being maintained by the unit.

Southern Laos and Cambodia

3. North Vietnamese logistic activity continued to decline in
southern Laos during the week. The roads of the central corridor --
Routes 99, 9211, and 958 -- continue to carry most of the traffic being
detected, but the number of trucks moving declined sharply this week.
Moreover, a significant northbound bias has been evident over the past week
or so. The northbound trucks were generally empty and possibly are en
route back to North Vietnam now that the dry season resupply effort is
at an end. Detected logistic activity included a 1 June report from an NVA
element in the Tchepone area which indicated that it would "continue phase
two of the crash transportation effort of 170 tons and have it basically
completed by 10 June."

4. Farther south the North Vietnamese are continuing some new
road construction. Aerial photography over the Se Kong River area west



of Chavane revealed that [] more than three miles had been added to a new north-south road roughly paralleling Route 16.

5. Evidence of logistical activity in the tri-border area and in northeastern Cambodia was extremely sparse during the week. NVA logistical units in the tri-border area have traditionally resorted to moving supplies by waterways during the summer wet season months, and such a move will probably soon occur this year. As of the beginning of June, however, the major overland routes from Laos into Cambodia still were in fair to good condition and supporting truck traffic despite increasingly wet weather.

South Vietnam

6. In northern MR 1, an NVA logistic unit operating near the Cua Viet River continued to move large numbers of vehicles through its area. In the most recently weekly status report received in COMINT, the unit reported that 5,428 vehicles transited its area during the period 24-30 May. No breakdown of vehicle types was given, but previous reports have indicated about 50% of the vehicles are cargo trucks, the remainder comprising jeeps and personnel carriers. Activity detected in photography has been particularly brisk along Route 9, where nearly 150 trucks were observed []. Photography also revealed several new storage areas and signs of logistical activity around Khe Sanh and Cam Lo -- both important Communist logistic centers on Route 9. Intercepted communications from the MR 1/Laos border area showed the 41st Engineer Regiment still very active. [] the regiment reportedly moved more than 500 tons of munitions through its operational area and had over 2,400 tons of ordnance in storage on that date.

7. Farther south the Communists are continuing to strengthen their logistic position in the B-3 Front area of South Vietnam []. South Vietnamese air observers reported two large truck convoys -- including 80 trucks carrying troops and 45 carrying supplies -- moving eastward some 20 miles northwest of Kontum City. A few days earlier, tanks and trucks towing heavy artillery and carrying men and supplies were sighted in the same area by ground observers.

8. In southern South Vietnam the Communists are using roads leading from the Cambodian border to within 35 miles of Saigon for the movement of heavy weapons. [] the Communists recently moved more than 40 37-mm antiaircraft guns into Binh Long Province just south of An Loc and in late May emplaced three 130-mm field guns seven miles northeast of Tay Ninh City.



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9. West of Saigon, COMINT continues to reflect the movement of ammunition within the Communists' Long An Subregion. According to a 27 May message, more than 20 tons of mortar rounds, explosives, and small arms ammunition were issued to a tactical unit [REDACTED]. And, in the lower Delta, an agent reports that during May the North Vietnamese continued infiltrating supplies from Cambodia into northern Kien Giang Province with assistance from local Viet Cong operating sampans.

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Recent Manpower Developments

Personnel Infiltration

10. Two regular combat infiltration groups were initially detected in enemy communications during the past week. On 30 May, Group 4015 was detected just below the DMZ in South Vietnam, but, because this group was previously accounted for by gapfilling, it does not increase our estimate of infiltration starts. The same day, Group 7081, with about 75 personnel, entered the pipeline at Vinh. Its appearance is puzzling because its numerical designator is out of sequence with previously observed groups in the 7xxx series, and its strength is far lower than usual for regular combat groups. At this time, it is impossible to determine the composition of Group 7081, but it has been included in our estimate of infiltration starts. Three special-purpose groups with some 150 specialists were also detected in the infiltration system during the past week. Table 1 below shows our estimate of infiltration starts since 1 September, by season, and Table 2 lists starts by week since 1 January 1973.

Table 1

Infiltration Starts, by Season

Destination	1 Sep 71 - 3 Jun 72	1 Sep 72 - 3 Jun 73
Total	126,000	93,000
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	27,000	33,000
MR 5	17,000	9,000
B-3 Front	30,000	14,000
COSVN	38,000	26,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	14,000	11,000

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Table 2

**Number of Personnel Entering the Pipeline
Since 1 January 1973**

	Total¹	Special- Purpose²
1-7 Jan	4,700	400
8-14	3,700	350
15-21	6,100	500
22-28	4,000	150
29-4 Feb	6,300	400
5-11	3,100	250
12-18	2,000	850
19-25	500	500
26-4 Mar	750	750
5-11	1,300	300
12-18	550	550
19-25	650	650
26-1 Apr	300	300
2-8	275	275
9-15	500	500
16-22	150	150
23-29	1,000	0
30-6 May	1,775	275
7-13	1,100	100
14-21	2,350	50
22-27	1,825	25
28-3 Jun	225	150

1. Including gap-filled groups, except Groups 7001 through 7009. Assuming that these groups departed between 1 January and 10 March, some 4,500 combat troops would be spread over the departures estimated for those weeks.

2. Including those groups which were initially detected without a specific strength but which have been assigned an average strength of 35.

11. Since 12 May, when the resumption of combat infiltration to the northern part of MR 1 was first noted, nine regular groups with some 5,000 troops have entered the pipeline in North Vietnam. The average strength of these groups is about 600 men, significantly higher than the historical average for regular groups. They could represent the infiltration of one or more integral NVA combat units through the system because such units often have a higher-than-average group strength. Ordinarily, however, when integral units are infiltrated through the system, they are given group designators with letter suffixes, and such suffixes have not been observed for any of these groups.

12. In infiltration-related activity, the headquarters of the 574th NVA Communications-Liaison Regiment was located in western Pleiku Province on 31 May. Although this is the first time the regiment has been located by radio direction finding, other sources have reported on its previous operation in the southeastern portion of the Laotian Panhandle. The movement of the 574th Regiment follows the recent relocation of NVA Rear Services elements into western South Vietnam and suggests that an increased emphasis will be given to future personnel infiltration via the new road system within South Vietnam.

Unit Redeployments in South Vietnam

13. At least one and probably two regiments of the NVA 5th Infantry Division have moved from Dinh Tuong Province in MR 4 to Tay Ninh Province in MR 3. The headquarters of the 6th Regiment was firmly located in northwestern Tay Ninh on 25 May, and recent tenuous information has located the 275th Regiment in the same general area. The remaining regiment of the 5th Division -- the 174th -- is reported to have suffered heavy casualties in the recent fighting around Hong Ngu in MR 4 and is currently believed to be refitting in that area. This evidence follows recent reports [redacted] indicating a scheduled upsurge in combat activity in Tay Ninh Province. The deployment of two regiments of the 5th Division into the province should substantially increase Communist capabilities there.

Unit Redeployments in Laos

14. Recent COMINT indicates that the North Vietnamese are preparing to relocate a number of combat units in northern Laos. An intercept of 30 May from MR 959, the senior NVA tactical authority in northern Laos, discussed the implementation of a "reorganization plan" in anticipation of the movement of several NVA combat units. It appears that elements of at least the 316th Division and 88th Independent Regiment

Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces

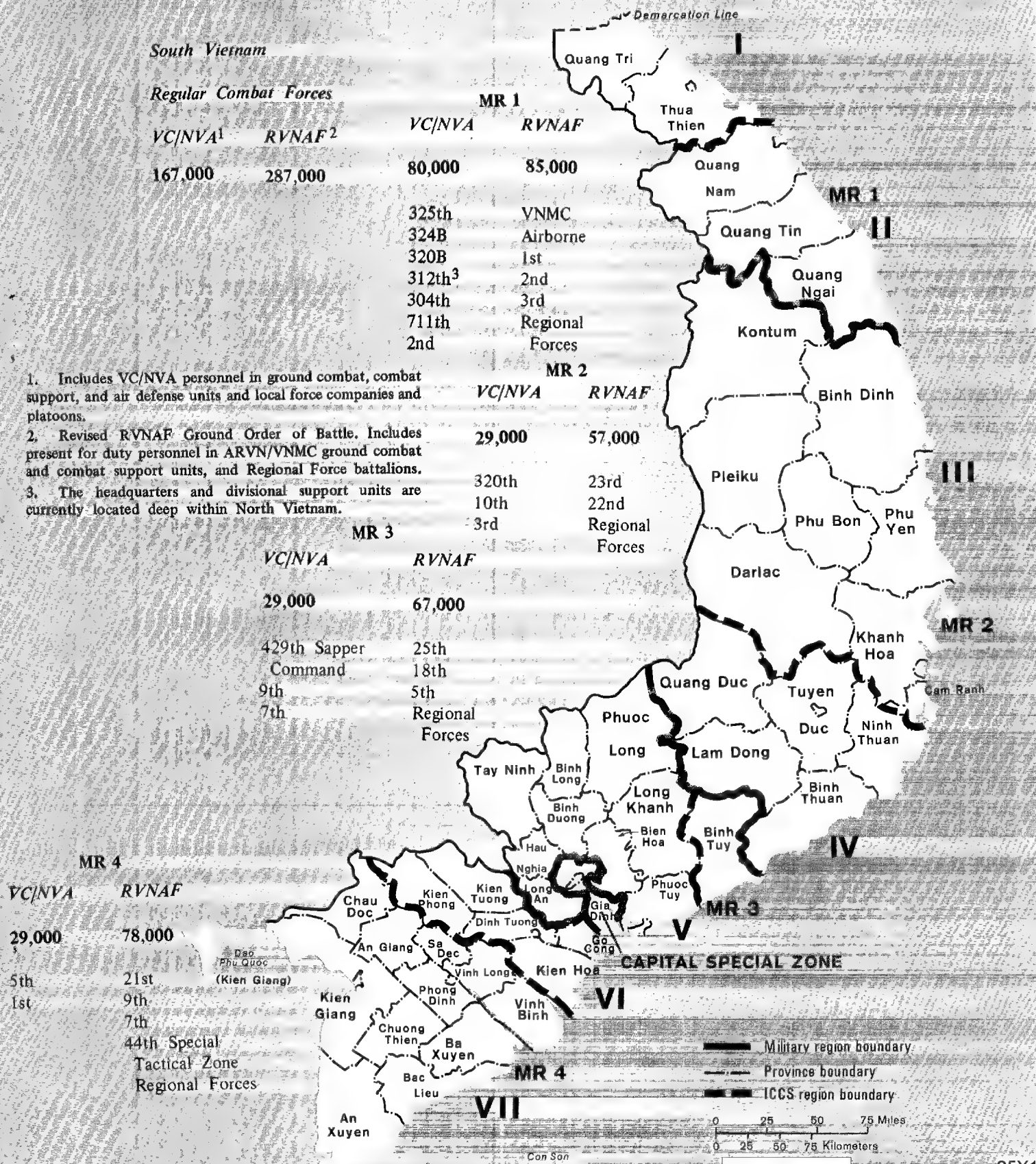
VC/NVA ¹	RVNAF ²
167,000	287,000

VC/NVA	RVNAF
80,000	85,000
325th	VNMC
324B	Airborne
320B	1st
312th ³	2nd
304th	3rd
711th	Regional Forces
2nd	

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. Revised RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes present for duty personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions.

3. The headquarters and divisional support units are currently located deep within North Vietnam.



are involved. These units have been operating in the vicinity of the Plaine des Jarres and the message probably refers to their repositioning for the wet season. Historically, with the approach of the rainy season, most NVA combat forces pull back from their forward positions in the Plaine to base areas in northern Laos for rest, refitting, and easier resupply, while others have redeployed to North Vietnam to rebuild during the rainy months.

15. In developments in southern Laos, there are tenuous indications that the 102nd Regiment of the NVA 308B Division has recently relocated to North Vietnam. Although the move cannot yet be confirmed, on 1 and 3 June the headquarters of the 102nd was located by radio direction finding of uncertain reliability in the general vicinity of Thanh Hoa, North Vietnam. As recently as late May, elements of the 102nd Regiment continued to communicate with the Laotian-based NVA 968th Division, to which it was tactically subordinate. The 102nd had operated in southern Laos since January 1973, when it was deployed there to reinforce NVA units already in the Panhandle.

Manpower Developments in Cambodia

16. Recent reports indicate that manpower shortages are hampering large unit operations by the Khmer Communists (KC). Two regiments operating along the Mekong south of Phnom Penh -- the 126th and 173rd -- are reportedly standing down after suffering more than 600 casualties in heavy fighting over the past few months. This standdown, which is to last from two to four weeks, follows a pattern of rotation of units in areas which have been subject to effective air strikes.

17. In an apparent attempt to replace recent casualties, the KC are upgrading and integrating local guerrilla units into the larger main force units. As a result, young recruits are being sent into battle with little or no training and are reportedly deserting in sizable numbers. If this is a widespread practice, a significant degradation of KC combat effectiveness could result.

Hanoi's Changing Air Defense Posture

18. Since late April, Hanoi apparently has reorganized and expanded its command and control capabilities over air defense operations in northern South Vietnam and southern Laos. This activity is reflected in the formation of a new division -- the 673rd -- in the Khe Sanh area of Quang Tri Province and the deployment of the previous controlling authority there -- the 377th Division -- to the Laotian Panhandle. The headquarters of the new 673rd NVA Air Defense Division now appears to have assumed

responsibility for all SAM and antiaircraft activities in Quang Tri Province. Thus the North Vietnamese air defense structure in Quang Tri remains essentially unchanged, with one division controlling one SAM regiment and 13 antiaircraft regiments of the Air Defense Command.

19. The deployment of the headquarters of the 377th Division to Laos may be more significant. Although we cannot explain why the move occurred at the onset of the rainy season and at a time when the headquarters of two major logistical commands have just relocated from the Panhandle to South Vietnam (see last week's report), three factors suggest that Hanoi may be expanding its out-of-country command and control of air defense operations in southern Laos. First, this is the initial instance of a North Vietnamese air defense division headquarters in Laos. Second, the headquarters has located to the Tchepone area and set up communications with the North Vietnamese High Command. Finally, the movement of the entity to the Panhandle may be associated with the six antiaircraft regiments of the Air Defense Command in that area¹ -- the largest observed number of antiaircraft forces targeted against southern Laos in May of any year.² As a result of this force expansion, there probably is a greater need now for a senior command authority in southern Laos than at any previous time. In the past the North Vietnamese have designated one of the antiaircraft regiments there to act as the senior controlling authority for air defense operations in the Panhandle. COMINT indicates, however, that this procedure has not been satisfactory and, given this year's expanded force structure, Hanoi may have decided to commit a division-level command authority to Laos.

20. Farther south, recently received evidence suggests that the 210th NVA Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment has deployed from Cambodia into South Vietnam's MR 3. A senior NVA captain of the 210th who recently rallied reveals that his unit deployed from Kratie, Cambodia, to Loc Ninh in Binh Long Province in March 1973.

21. Another significant development affecting Hanoi's air defense posture in North Vietnam, and probably the contiguous portions of South Vietnam and Laos as well, is the shifting southward of at least two SAM regiments during the past several weeks. On 22 May, COMINT revealed that the 267th SAM Regiment had deployed to the Vinh area and is now probably operational there. This is the first confirmed fix on the 267th

1. The division headquarters has not yet established tactical communications with these six regiments or formed any new support elements to replace those left in South Vietnam, but this may be indicative of a transitional phase.

2. Usually, antiaircraft regiments in southern Laos withdraw to North Vietnam in May with the onset of the rainy season and return in October in preparation for dry season logistical activities.

Regiment since December 1972 when it was known to be operating in the Hanoi/Thanh Hoa area. In early April, another SAM regiment -- the 275th -- began deploying southward from the Thanh Hoa area and is currently located at Dong Tam in northern Quang Binh Province. In addition to these, there are tenuous indications in COMINT that a third SAM regiment -- the 236th -- is preparing for deployment or military operations of an undisclosed nature. The 236th has been active in southern Quang Binh Province of North Vietnam since September 1972.

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